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A NOTE ON THE NEWARI TERM *BARE*

It is a well-known fact that the members of the two highest classes in Newar Buddhist society have the honorary title of *bare*, that is to say, « Venerable ». Both Vajrācārya and Śākya(bhikṣu) boys acquire this title, a remainder of by-gone monastic life, when, generally at the age of three, five or seven years, they undergo the *pravrajyā* ceremony, which, significantly, is called *bare chuyagu* « ordaining (somebody) as a *bare* » in modern Newari. In recent times, however, the name *bare* has been preferably limited to denote Śākya(bhikṣu)s, since ordination, in the case of the Śākya(bhikṣu)s, remains the prerogative of the *pravrajyā*. As we know, Vajrācāryas have to receive yet another initiation. It is by this second rite, the *vajrācāryābhiṣeka*, in Newari called *ācā: luyagu* « ordaining (somebody) as an Ācārya », that a young, usually newly married, Vajrācārya becomes a true Vajrācārya, invested with all the rights of his status, the most important of which being the authority to officiate as a household priest (*purohita*), a duty he will perform not only for families of his own and the Śākya(bhikṣu) class but also the numerous, and larger, groups of lay Buddhists.

As the term *bare* is pronounced and, in writing, rendered in a rather bewildering mixture of various forms belonging both to literary and modern Newari, Sanskrit and even Nepali, we shall here try to classify and explain the various spellings in use. To begin with, it must be noted that *bare* does not derive from *bhante*, a Pali loan-word, which was introduced into the Kath-

mandu Valley by Theravadins only during the last few decennia. *bare*, a Newari *tadbhava*, has been in use for several centuries at least and goes back to Sanskrit *vandya*, which, as *ya* and *e* are interchangeable in Newari, is frequently rendered as *vande* or, *v* being pronounced as *b*, in the form of *bande*.

In older literature *vandya/bandya* or *vande/bande* occurs either as a generic designation for Vajrācāryas and Śākya(bhikṣu)s or is appended to the personal name of an individual, who, since he belongs to one of these classes, must have undergone the *bare chuyagu* ceremony. Thus we have the names Amrita Nanda Bandya (Hodgson)¹ and Buddhācārya (= Vajrācārya) Pūrṇarāja Vande², while a Newari inscription dated N.E. 878 (1758 A.D.) speaks of the *khvapayā themiyā baṁde* 'the Bandes, that is to say, the Vajrācāryas and Śākya(bhikṣu)s, of Thimi'³.

The form *bande* served as the basis for the modern Newari word *banre/baṁre*. In Newari orthography, which is extremely unstable, the alternation of *d/ḍ* and *r*, as in *bande* : *banre*, is exceedingly common. This can be shown by the following word-pairs: *khaḍu* 'threshold' is frequently rendered as *kharu*; *khaḍga* 'sword' as *kharga*; *udeka cāya* 'to become surprised' as *ureka cāya*; *udāsa* 'a member of the Udāsa class of lay Buddhists' as *urāya*; and *pode* 'the name of a certain group of outcastes' as *pore*.

In his *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, Brian Houghton Hodgson, British Resident at the Court of Nepal from 1833 to 1843, uses, as a rule, the term *bandya*⁴ but makes also mention of the expression *bāmrā* which he renders as *Bānra*. He even comments on this term, saying that 'the word Bandya, the name of the Buddhamārgi sect,... is metamorphosed by ignorance into Bānra, a word which has no

1. H. B. HODGSON, *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, Amsterdam, 1972 (reprint), p. 65.

2. Cf. *Nepalese Manuscripts, Part 1: Nevārī and Sanskrit*. Described by S. LIENHARD with the collaboration of Th. L. MANANDHAR, Stuttgart, 1988 (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, XXXIII, 1), Nos. 222, 226, 228, 240, 251 and 254 f.

3. See H. SAKYA and T. R. VADYA, *Medieval Nepal (Colophons and Inscriptions)*, Kathmandu, 1970, p. 234.

4. H. B. HODGSON, *loc. cit.*, pp. 30 ff., 41, 51, 63 and 139 ff.

meaning'⁵. Unfortunately, our learned Hodgson is wrong. *bāmṛā* is Nepali or, to be more precise, a Nepali adaptation of the Newari word *banre/banṛe* which, in the form of *bāmṛā*, has been adjusted to the rules of Nepali morphology. Besides *bāmṛā*, also *bāmṛe* is used in Nepali.

In his Nepali Dictionary, R. L. Turner lists, of course, both *bāmṛā* and *bāmṛe*, marking the former as a noun and the latter, which, as a matter of fact, functions as either a noun or an adjective, as an adjective only. As Turner was mainly a linguist, he explains both entries somewhat vaguely and, moreover, links *bāmṛā* to the Kafirī (Ashkun) lexeme *bārī* 'smith'. *bāmṛā* is explained by him as 'coppersmith or goldsmith'; coppersmith caste (who are Newars); — highest division of Newar Buddhists' and *bāmṛe* as 'Pertaining to the coppersmith caste', *b(āmṛe)jātrā* as 'a part(icular) festival of the coppersmiths'⁶. Although it is true that the traditional secular profession of Śākya(bhikṣu)s has been that of silversmiths, later on also 'coppersmiths', Turner fails to inform us that Nepali *bāmṛā* is, above all, a religious title, conferred, as has already been pointed out, upon both Śākhyā(bhikṣu)s (silver- and coppersmiths) and Vajrācāryas (the secular profession of whom was that of goldsmiths and collectors of gold dust) and that *bāmṛā* and *bāmṛe*, moreover, are equivalent to the Sanskrit word *vandya*. Still more awkward is Turner's explanation of *bāmṛejātrā* as 'a part(icular) festival of coppersmiths', as *bāmṛe* in *bāmṛejātrā* (mod. Newari *barejātrā*) refers to both types of *bares* and *bāmṛejātrā*, also a loan-word from Newari, is the name given to the great annual *paṃjādāna*-procession during *Gūṃlā*, the holy month of the Newar Buddhists. This procession is always attended by *bares* of both Vajrācārya and Śākya(bhikṣu) descent⁷.

One last, though important variant, is Newari *bade* or, more current, *bare*, which developed from *bande* and *banre* respectively.

5. H. B. HODGSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 51.

6. R. L. TURNER, *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language*, London, 1931 and 1965 (reprint, with corrections), *sub verbo*.

7. Cf. S. LIENHARD, *Gūṃlā, der heilige Monat der buddhistischen Newars* (in publication).

Newari *bade/bare* shows the typical loss of the nasal *n/ṃ*, which, as a matter of fact, is very often elided in modern Newari when standing in the initial position of a consonant-cluster. Further examples of this elision are Newari lexemes such as *oṃkuli* 'the eastern corner' > *okuli*, *thaṃhiti* 'the well of the Upper Town' > *thahiti*, or *cheṃdi* 'the base of the house' > *chedi/cheri*. In the same way, the final nasalization of a word is also frequently dropped, with the result that many words occur in two variants, a nasalized one and one without nasalization: for example: *luṃ* : *lu* 'gold' and *laṃ* : *la* 'way', 'road'.

Summarizing what we have discussed in this article we can thus give the following list of word-forms for the title 'Venerable': (1) Sanskrit *vandya* / *bandya*; (2) *vande* / *bande*, which is the Newari spelling of *vandya* / *bandya*; (3) Newari *banre* / *baṃre*; (4) Nepali *bāṃrā*; and, ultimately, (5) modern Newari *bade* and *bare*.